

THE STAR DRAMA.

*

THE PET OF PARSONS' RANCH.

A Comedy-Drama in Five Acts.

—BY—

W. F. FELCH.

PRICE 15 CENTS.

CHICAGO:
T. S. DENISON.

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LOUVA, THE PAUPER.—A drama in five acts. Time, one hour and forty-five minutes. Nine males, four females.

LIMERICK BOY. (THE)—A farce. Time, forty-five minutes. Five males, two females.

MY WIFE'S RELATIONS.—Comedietta. Time, one hour. Four males, six females.

MY TURN NEXT.—A farce. Time forty-five min. Four males, three females.

MY NEIGHBOR'S WIFE.—A farce. Time forty-five minutes. Three males, three females.

NOT SUCH A FOOL AS HE LOOKS.—A farcical drama in three acts. Time, two hours. Five males, four females.

PERSECUTED DUTCHMAN. (THE)—A farce. Time, fifty minutes. Six males, three females.

QUIET FAMILY, (A)—A farce. Time, forty-five minutes. Four males, four females.

REGULAR FIX, (A)—A farce. Time, forty min. Six males, four females.

ROUGH DIAMOND. (THE) (Country Cousin)—A farce. Time, forty minutes. Four males, three females.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE. (A)—A comedy drama in five acts. Time, two hours and twenty minutes. Eight males, three females.

SPARKLING CUP, (THE)—A temperance play in five acts. Time, one hour and forty-five minutes. Twelve males, four females.

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TOODLES, (THE)—A drama in two acts. Time, one hour and fifteen min. Six males, two females.

TURN HIM OUT.—A farce. Time, forty-five min. Three males, two females.

THE TWO PUDDIFOOTS.—A farce. Time, forty minutes. Three males, three females.

UNDER THE LAURELS.—A drama in five acts. Time, one hour and forty-five minutes. Five males, four females.

T. S. DENISON, Publisher, Chicago.

THE
PET OF PARSONS' RANCH

A COMEDY-DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

W. FARRAND FELCH.

WITH THE CAST OF CHARACTERS, COSTUMES, SCENES AND PROPERTIES,
RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE DRAMATIS
PERSONÆ, ETC., ETC.

CHICAGO:
T. S. DENISON, PUBLISHER.
163 Randolph Street.

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THE PET OF PARSONS' RANCH.

CHARACTERS.

"PET" PARSONS, a child of nature.

AARON PARSONS, her father, keeper of "Parsons' Ranch," a hotel on the overland stage route.

JEFF ROGERS, an old stager and a whole-souled fellow.

NEIL NORRIS, *alias* TOM HART, *alias* TOM AMBROSE, a gambler, "road agent," etc.

"LARIAT JOE," Norris' partner in iniquity.

HARRY GROSVENOR, a cultured tourist from the East, but true blue.

MR. STALKENLILY, a matter-of-fact detective, with a case of his own.

FATHER FLYNN, a real missionary, among "heretics."

"PAP" REEDER, an old "49er," slow and easy.

ALEC. BARTLETT, an Eastern capitalist, bluff and middle-aged.

GERTIE GROSVENOR, Harry's sister, from Boston.

Miners, Stage Passengers, and Vigilantes.

TIME—*Prior to the building of the Union Pacific Railroad.*

PLACE—"Parsons' Ranch" in the Sierras.

Time of playing two hours.

COSTUMES.

FATHER FLYNN.—Long black coat, high cut vest buttoning to throat, smooth shaven.

MINERS.—Brown duck overalls and sack coats of same material, greasy and well-worn mostly; woolen shirts; slouch wool hats; heavy boots; some with shaggy whiskers and unkempt appearance, others neater; belts and revolvers.

JEFF ROGERS.—Corduroy trousers worn inside boot tops; velvet vest and coat; fancy woolen shirt, showing some kind of tie at throat; white sombrero; buckskin driving gloves with very long tops; hair rather

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long and inclined to curl (black or brown). Make-up of a "crack" stage driver of the gold hunting days. If obtainable, may wear buckskin trousers with a fancy stripe and row of buckskin fringe up legs. In scene I of fifth act, semi-dress suit and more nearly costume of the day, to end of play.

NEIL NORRIS.—Rough and ready business suit, somewhat better than the average.

STALKENLILY AND HARRY.—Costumes of the day, excepting they wear woolen shirts.

LARIAT JOE may be smooth shaven, and for disguise change clothing and wear whiskers.

PET.—Neat dress of plain materials; hair dressed very simply or falling in natural ringlets; tidy and attractive.

BILL OF THE PLAY.

ACT I.—The hotel at Parsons' Ranch in the Sierras. The miners have a quiet game of poker. Neil Norris proposes to Pet Parsons; threatens her when she scorns his offer. "A father in the penitentiary." Old Si Smiles, his mawl and his dawg. Aaron Parsons' secret.

ACT II.—Stalkenlily the detective. Aaron Parsons "spotted." Plan to rob the Wells-Fargo stage coach. Parsons forced to join the gang.

ACT III.—The robbery on the "Divide." Parsons seen with the gang unmasked. Pet's night ride to save him. In the hands of Norris. Her rescue.

ACT IV.—Pet nurses Harry, who was wounded in her rescue. Parsons in danger. The lynch court. Escape. Disappearance of Parsons and Pet.

ACT V.—Jeff Rogers the "crack" stage driver, is sent on the hazardous mission of escorting a handsome young lady across the plains with disastrous consequences to his heart. Return of Parsons and Pet to Parsons' Ranch. Arrest of Norris and disclosure of the secret. Parsons' dying bequest. The double wedding.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R means right—the actor facing the audience; *L*, left; *C*, center; *R C*, right center; *U E*, upper entrance; *1 G*, first groove, etc.

NOTE.—Persons desiring to present this play, will please address the author, at Hartford, Conn., for additional suggestions, directions, and other gratuitous assistance, which he will be pleased to offer, in order that it may be successfully produced.

THE PET OF PARSONS' RANCH.

ACT I.

EVENING.—*Room lighted with candles. Miners and others seated around table L. 1 E.—Four of them engaged in playing cards; viz.: Neil Norris, Lariat Joe, and two others. Small table R. 1 E. for "Pet" with lamp and sewing materials thereon. Hotel counter at L. C. Door C. Aaron behind counter.*

Pap Reeder (with box in his hands, enters C.) Now boys, I brought this contraption down here to let you see it, sence you have been a wantin' to for so long. I'll warrant this contrivance to save all the gold there is in any material whatever—mud, water, gravel, quartz, or sulphurets.

Aaron. It's like them paytent medicines,—warranted to cure everything.

Reeder. Well, you see, boys, the greatest obstacle to gold *is* impurities, and my process is call'ted to remove them. Ef they come thar by water, like this 'ere gulch gold, it'll take 'em out by water. This 'ere quartz gold's got impurities—come there by fire, and it'll take 'em out by fire,—jest the way they come thar—that's the hull science of the matter. Here, I'll show you the paytent. (*Takes paper from his pocket and reads:*) "After the impurities *is* removed the gold remains,—whereas, etcetery, etcetery,—removes impurities."

Father Flynn. No, bedad, that's jest what it won't do. Sure the goold is as bad as the pigs in the old counthry—av ye remove the dirt, ye can't kape the pig. (*Sound of wheels outside*). Jeff's ahead of toime, the night.

Reeder. A fellow can't help being ahead of time with a down grade and a full moon, and Parsons' Ranch at the eend of the road. Jeff has no call to be late under them sarcumstances. Besides, he allers finds "Pet" here,—the pet of the camp.

Father F. That girrul of Aaron's can jest see any girrul on the Pacific Shlope, go her ten betther, rake in the sthakes, and niver show her hond. Aye, she's a trump,—and well-named—"the Pet of the camp."

Norris. (*at table, L. 1 E.*) Father Flynn, I am surprised to hear you using gambler's slang.

Father F. Oh, I'm used to spakin your koind of language,—but, sorra a bit, I was only spakin metaphorically, so to speak. And aven then I could not do justice to her blissed picter. Where is she, Aaron?

Aaron. She's gone up the grade, after the old cow.

Father F. The saints protect her, now. She'd betther not go alone after this, or the Road-agents will be after her—the blissed girrul!

Jeff. (*calling outside at a distance, which gradually grows louder*). Whoa! Ho there! Whoa now! Ho—o—o!

Father F. (aside). And there's another fellow will be after her, too, the sly dog.

Jeff (enters C. with treasure-box, and whip in hand). Well, boys, what's the racket?

Aaron. Nothin' much. Any passengers, Jeff?

Jeff. Not a soul now, but I left three scaly specimens half way down the grade near Pap Reeder's. What in thunder they wanted to get out thar for I can't imagine. Mebbe they were after Pap's *smelting* box; ha, ha,—hey, boys?

Aaron. What kind of lookin men were they, Jeff?

Jeff. (aside) Suspicious as ever. *(aloud)* Well, fair to middling. I asked one of them what he wanted to get out thar for, and he said they were prospecting. Mighty cur'us way. Give me one partner that I can freeze to, and no one to interfere till our claim is staked out—hey, boys? But here's your express box, Aaron.

Aaron. (takes box from Jeff). The dust must be coming in lively from the gulch, for these boxes are getting too heavy to be handy. *(exit Aaron with treasure box L.)*

Jeff. The stuff don't all come from the divide, for the water is so low up thar they can't mix thar drinks. All the boys are taking their whiskey straight, and thar's some talk of cleaning out the saloons and pouring the liquor into the creek, so as to fill up the sluices. But they can't trust anybody to carry out that plan,—hey boys?

Father F. It would be a blissed day to put into the calendar, if the wather would all dry up, so they'd have to use the whiskey that way, and couldn't get anither drap to wet their whistles wid.

Jeff. I quite agree with you my Christian friend. Put it thar. *(shake hands; Jeff goes up to the card table.)*

Father F. And heard playing is anither devarsion of the divil.

Jeff. I'm with you again, my reverend friend. *(they shake.)*

Father F. (aside to Jeff.) And if I'm not mistaken, there's some diviltry going on over there.

Jeff. I'll keep my weather eye on them. *(goes over to the table.)* Hello, Neil, passing the time agreeably, eh? You'll have to shut down on gaming if you are going to ride over the treasure-box of the Wells-Fargo Company. They ain't over fond of their messengers playing poker. *(Starts. comes up C; aside)* Oho! my fine fellow has an extra card concealed in his cuff. I'll spoil his little game for him. I'll play his hand for him, and play it clear out,—and he dares n't peach. If he does he's a goner. *(goes back to the card table.)* You're looking pale, Neil, and these gentlemen will have to excuse you. I'll take *your* hand jest as it stands. I'll give you a chance to change your luck.

Lariat Foe. (aside to his partner, Neil.) We want to stick to the lead we are on; don't let that sharper bilk you, pard.

Neil. (rises, gives cards to Jeff and comes up C.) Curses on his sharp eyes. *(removes card from his sleeve and puts in pocket.)* If he hadn't seen that card we would have had their pile in another holy minute.

Father F. (comes up C. to Neil.) You see, Neil, Jeff is as brave as a grizzly bear, and jest about as sassy. Phwat he don't know is pretty lean tailings, and not worth panning out, eh?

Neil. (*turning aside.*) Does this meddling priest know of it too? I'll question him. (*aloud.*) So you wanted to see the game broken up?

Father F. (*boldly.*) You're just roight, me mon, seeing as it was all one-sided. So I wasn't a bit sorry when Jeff took the cards out of your hands. Now, he'll toorn the tables and give them poor divils a chance to get their money back where it roightly belongs. Keard playing is the divil's devarsion, but if there's is any justice in it, Jeff will foind it out. He's a trump.

Neil. Oh, it's all right, but I shall be even with him.

Father F. (*laughing.*) Shure he's shmart. He wasn't going to interfere direct wid a desperate mon and get a quarrel put onto him. He didn't want a hole bored through him, or mebbe six holes for the day-loight to crape through. He warnt on the foight at all, at all; so he jest took hold av your hand of keards and I've an idea he'll help thim poor byes over the riffle.

Neil. Perhaps you instigated him, sir.

Father F. That's for you to foind out.

Neil. (*aside.*) So then he is in my secret, curse him.

Jeff. (*at the table, playing cards.*) Tell you what, Neil, I'm glad this is your hand, not mine. Fact is it is thawing away faster'n ice.

Father F. (*at door C.*) Ah, here comes that blissid girrul, "Pet".
(*Enter Pet hastily, breathless and laughing. Shuts the door and puts back against it.*)

Pet. Oh, what a jolly run I had. Whew!

Aaron. Well, Pet, did you find the white cow?

Pet. Yes. Found her half way up the divide, tumbled into one of old Timken's prospecting holes. Lucky she didn't go over the other side of the road instead. She would have got her everlasting never-get-over-it if she had. It would have made beef of her, sure.

Father F. Phwat's that about going up the divide. You had better look out for yourself for the road agents have stharterd a branch office somewhere forninst here, and they are doin a con'hract business.

Reeder. Yaas, they might carry you off. They busted old uncle Billy's sluice-boxes the other night, and cleaned all the quick out of the riffles and went through three Chinees on the grade that night.

Pet. (*takes from her pocket a small ivory-handled revolver.*) I ain't afraid. We don't go shopping alone. There's six of us. (*seats herself at table R. 1 E. and serves.*)

Neil. (*comes forward, looks at Father Flynn and Pet covertly, and then seats himself on the other side of the table from her. Aside to her in a low tone.*) I wish you good-evening, Miss Parsons.

Pet. (*without looking up.*) Good-evening, sir.

Neil. Have you considered the little proposition that I took the liberty of making, yesterday afternoon. It was unfortunate that you were interrupted when you were about to give me an answer.

Pet. (*looks around carefully.*) Your proposal was made once before and declined. You had no reason to expect a different answer when you met me alone on the grade and repeated your proposal which I did not care to hear. If Jeff had not come by with the stage just then I should have given you some angry words.

Neil. But you are not angry now?

Pet. I give you the same answer that I gave you then.

Neil (*leans closer and says fiercely*) I would not have let you off so easily if Jeff had not come along.

Pet. Sir, what do you mean?

Neil. I merely mean to say that I had then, and still have, something to say in addition to my protestations of love that will probably lead you to change your mind. Your father—

Pet. You are going too far, sir. I do not know by what means you have gained my father's good opinion, but he will not control mine. You have twice asked me to marry you, but I tell you now and forever—no. And if you persecute me any more I shall inform my friends. I have as many here as you have, and I have only to say the word and they will fly to my aid. But I spare you, on condition that you never mention this subject again to me.

(*Neil, chagrined, turns away and meditates.*)

Jeff (*watching them closely.*) What's up, Pet? Don't you take any more of his lip-currency than suits you.

Pet. Nothing is up. Mr. Norris and I have had a little argument, that's all. A sort of two hand euchre, you know. (*laughs*) It was quite harmless and rather stupid, and there were no stakes.

Neil. (*turns and faces her fiercely. Aside to her.*) There are no stakes but a father—say a father in States' prison.

Pet (*frightened*). I do not understand you, sir.

Neil. You understand me very well, Miss Parsons. And now, permit me to add that I shall have the pleasure to repeat my proposal tomorrow. Until then think it over well.

Reeder (*who has been tinkering with his box.*) I say, Parson Flynn, what do you say to wetting our whistles?

Father F. I'm a temperance man, but I do not mind a sup for stomach's sake.

Reeder. All right, boys. Come on Mr. Norris. It's my treat. (*Exeunt C.*)

Aaron (*watches Norris exit, and then comes forward and sits at table opposite Pet; speaks low.*) Fine fellow that Mr. Norris, Pet. So gentlemanly and so—

Pet. A gentleman? No! A gambler and a villain! I can not bear him! Father, are you really in his power?

Aaron (*nervously*). Oh,—no—no my dear, only—I wish you would—be kind to him—for—my—sake.

Pet. For your sake, father? Certainly. But what do you mean by that?

Aaron. I can not tell you now. Some other time—when I am stronger—and you are better able to bear the burden I now bear. You know you promised me once that you would never ask me to reveal my secret until the right time came for telling you. (*He exits R. sorrowfully.*)

Pet. I have promised and I will keep my promise, if it breaks my heart. (*follows him off slowly, R.*)

(*Re-enter Reeder, Norris, Jeff and Father Flynn, C.*)

Jeff. (*at card table.*) Well, Neil, here goes the last of your dust, but

I'm going to rake down the pile or bust. (*Lariat Joe produces another bag of gold. Jeff hesitates a moment. Aside to Joe.*) Don't you put down your money, my friend, till you look at your cards again,—all of them. We want no mistakes in this game. (*Neil comes behind Jeff's chair and looks into Jeff's hand.*)

Neil. (*to Joe.*) No use betting against that hand.

Joe. (*puts bag of gold back in his pocket.*) I guess I was mistaken. That lets me out. (*Throws down cards, rises and goes L.*)

Neil (*as Joe passes him.*) You fool, in another minute you would have had him counting all the aces in the pack. You'd better mosey. (*Exit Joe C.*)

Jeff (*rising from card table.*) Well, that beats all. Neil, you'll have to play for me some time, jest to make things square, you know. (*Enter Pet R. with Jeff's supper.*) Why, here's Pet. Now I shouldn't wonder if I had kept the lady waiting. Have I, Pet? (*exit Neil C.*) (*Pet only shakes her head as she places his supper on the table R.*) Pet, what's the matter? Sulks to-day? (*She shakes her head again.*) Well, you needn't speak unless you want to, Pet.

Pet. It is too bad, Jeff; you promised you would not gamble any more and now you are just as foolish as the rest.

Jeff. Well, now, Pet, don't crack your whip until your leaders are hitched up. I was only turning the tables on my beloved friend, Mr. Norris. You see those fellows had aces in their boots and sleeves until they couldn't rest; and ef the boys here had found it out there'd have been a shooting or worse. Maybe somebody would have danced in the air with their boots on, right in front of this house. Thar's trees handy.

Pet. It would have served them right, then. The boys all know how I hate gambling. But these were all strangers, except Mr. Norris, and I fancy he does not care much for my opinion.

Jeff. Well, I don't like hangings along side of the road. It scares hosses and sets them to shying and backing and fooling generally. No more do I want shooting around this ranch. It spoils the furniture and fixings, and gives folks unpleasant idees about the place.

Pet. Then you took it all on your own shoulders to stop any quarrel. It was so good of you, Jeff.

Jeff. Well, even if I do feel inclined to draw a bead on him, I hadn't a show, to-night, for I left my six-shooter on the seat of my coach, like a fool, handy for road-agents, but of no use to me. A man ought to go well heeled if he expects to have dealings with Norris and his crowd. (*Eating rapidly, but stops and looks at Pet suddenly.*) Say, really, Pet, you aint down on me, are you? You see I would have brought that six-shooter in and used it on his carcass if I had known you wanted me to.

Pet. No, no, don't say such dreadful things. But why did you gamble, Jeff?

Jeff. Well that would make a good story. It was the neatest thing on Mr. Norris he ever struck. I just let him see I found him cheating, so I took his hand from him, and showed him how to play poker. He behaved very quiet and gentlemanly, you bet—hey, boys? Beg pardon. I was thinking the boys were here. Well, it took about twenty minutes to lose Neil's pile for him. The gulch boys got their gold back again and I haven't really gambled any, have I?

Pet. No, I shouldn't call it a winning game for you, Jeff.

Jeff. It was a put up game. You might say two put up games—Norris's and then mine—but mine rather laid over his, I cal'late?

Pet. Jeff, I want to talk to you about father.

Jeff. Now's your time. But first it's all right about the poker game, Pet? It was a put up game, you know; he knew that, and he's figuring to get even with me, somehow.

Pet. Yes, yes, it's all right I suppose; at any rate it's just like you getting into other people's quarrels—not that I object to that, for the fact is I want you to give *me* a lift—will you?

Jeff. All right. A free ride on my coach, just as far as you like. (*aside.*) I wish it was for the whole everlasting trip till we pass in our checks.

Pet. I have nobody but you to go to, Jeff, you know, and somehow I know you can do something for me. That Mr. Norris has been talking to father and frightening him, and as father seems to be on his side, it's two to one, which isn't fair to me now, is it?

Jeff. (*aside.*) Oh, I see how it is. He has been making love to her. (*looks at her steadily.*) Do you like that fellow, Pet?

Pet. I hate him. Oh, *how* I hate him.

Jeff. Now, *don't* say that. If you hate a fellow you'll begin to think too much of him. You can't play agin him and win unless you keep cool and take things easy. But what's he driving at, Pet?

Pet. (*desperately.*) He has asked me twice to *marry* him—and *father* has asked me to be *kind* to him.

Jeff. (*solemnly.*) Well, so you must. You be kind to him and I'll take charge of the hating business. No, I won't hate him, neither; but I'll spoil his game, and I'll run him out of camp, as sure as my name's Jeff Rogers. What sort of a hold has he got on the old man, Pet?

Pet. I don't know—only he said something about—a—State's prison.

Jeff. Well, now, it ain't my gait, you know, to go asking unnecessary questions; but Pet, was the old man in any kind of a scrape—dead broke, you know—down on his luck?—Under a shadow when he left the States?

Pet. (*embarrassed.*) I do not know, and I have promised my father to never ask him about the past. But oh, he *is* a good man. Do believe me, and don't give us up. I have nobody but you to trust in. And you have always been a brother to me.

Jeff. (*confused.*) Brother be hanged! I ain't much in the brother line, Pet. Couldn't you give me a little promotion on that? I ain't fit to be your husband, although I have improved some sence you took the reins. But, if such infernal smooth scoundrels as Neil Norris are prospecting around, I don't see why I haven't a show. Marry me, Pet, marry me.

Pet. (*earnestly.*) Don't make me drive you away, Jeff. I can not lose a friend such as you have been, nor can I take a husband. Besides, you haven't considered, you want to help me and you think that is the shortest way. You haven't thought of marrying any one until this moment. We will go back won't we, to where we were before?

Jeff. What—and say it all over again? I don't know but what you are right, Pet; I hadn't thought much of marrying before—though it sorter seems as if I shouldn't think of much else from now on. But I'll

turn it over in my mind. Anyhow it shan't make any difference between us, eh Pet? To be your brother ain't much—but it's better than nothing, and when you're ready to begin over again as you say—I'll "pop" again, eh, Pet.

Pet. But will you help me and my father?

Jeff. I can't drive when I don't see my leaders, to say nothing of my wheel-horses—but I'll do my best. As for Neil Norris, I'll settle his case. No, you needn't look scared. No shooting if I can help it. But, whatever I do, you will trust me, Pet?

Pet. Always; and will *you* trust *us*?

Jeff. Trust you? Yes, I will trust you to the day of my death, sweetheart. Give us your hand on it. (*She gives her hand to him.*)

Pet. There's my hand, Jeff, and I will trust you. But I must go now. (*She takes up dishes on waiter.*) Good-bye, and God bless you for a friend. (*Exit R. with dishes on the waiter.*)

Jeff. She is pure gold, every grain of her. I ain't so sure about the old man, though—no savvy, no fight. He's been dead broke some time, and never got over it. Pet thinks him innocent, but what's the use of that. It's no use being innocent until some one says you're guilty.

(*Neil appears at back C. and listens.*)

Pet rather shied off about the marrying business. Served me right, but she wasn't a bit flustered. She got out of the way as easy as a chicken, and I never could drive over a chicken when I drive my prettiest. That's Pet all over, only she don't flutter or squawk.

Neil. (*aside.*) The devil. So he has made love to her?

Jeff. I can't quite see into that Norris' hand. When the agent told me this morning that he was going to send Norris to ride guard over the treasure box I laughed at the idea of thar being any danger. But I'm afraid there's some deviltry afoot, and if thar is that Norris is in it sure. Well, I'll lay for him anyhow.

(*Enter Aaron followed by Harry Grosvenor and Mr. Stalkenlily L. Enter Neil, Joe and Pap Reeder.*)

Aaron. Gentlemen, this is Mr. Grosvenor from Boston.

Jeff. (*rises and shakes his hand.*) Ho, ho, my hearty. These are the gentlemen I left up the divide, prospecting.

Mr. S. Hang the fellow, he'll spoil my chances if he advertises us in this way.

Joe. (*aside to Norris.*) Say, Tom?

Jeff. (*overhears them. Aside.*) Oho, *Tom*, is it? I thought as much. Now I have got a hold on the man I want.

Neil. Don't call me *Tom*.

Joe. Well, then, *Neil*, I don't like the looks of them sharps that have just come to town. Still the young man looks green, and mebbe he's got some money that's too hefty for him and we can relieve him of it; but the o'd un over thar is up to some new game. I'll be hanged ef he ain't takin' notes.

Neil. Never mind them, Joe. They'll have to get up before sun-up to catch this weasel asleep.

Aaron. The gentlemen are newspaper men from the East, Jeff; and

perhaps you can favor them with some ideas about the country out here. (*Exit Aaron L.*)

Jeff. No, can't say as I can. I'm not much on the story-telling line. That's Pap Reeder's best holt. Say, Pap, spose you tell 'em about that mule of "Spanish George's." (*to Harry.*) Nobody else can tell *that* story when *he's* around.

Pap. Wall, then to begin; of all the queer fellows from Los Angeles to Yreka, old Si Smiles laid over them all. He userder live all by himself, with that dawg of hisn and that mewl of hisn. He was the fust man on the coast as understood the valoo of quartz,—and the same could be said of the mewl and the dawg. Ye see he userder go every whar on that mewl of his'n with his rifle and pick, a-prospectin', and every time he'd come to a bowlder or a piece of float quartz off he'd get and hammer away and that mewl would stand for hours.

Jeff. Oh, let the mewl stand; but tell about old Si's partner, "Spanish George."

Pap. Jeff, ef you want me to tell this story, *you* keep quiet, do you hear? Wall, the old man had a partner called "Spanish George"—no more Spanish than you or I be, stranger, only he married a Spanish gal and took her name, 'stid of given her hisn you see?

Jeff. No harm in that, hey, boys? Only if a man drops one name because it's played out on the road and hitches onto another, let him stick to that as long as he can—hey, Neil, ain't that so? (*Neil winces.*)

Pap. Jeff, ef you don't stop pesterin me while I'm tellin this story, you'll get me riled up. Wall, as I was sayin', when old Si died "Spanish George" took the dawg and the mewl down to his ranch in the foothills, but they wan't no count at all. The dawg was allers nosing around every quartz rock he come across after gold; and the mewl would stop short at every stun in the road, and no amount of poundin' or cussin' would budge her until you'd get off and hammer at that stun. Only the mewl wan't no jedge of quartz, like the dawg was.

Harry. Remarkable story. I'll note it down. (*Takes out note book and writes.*)

Pap. Yaas, do. But one day that dawg made sech a fuss over a ledge of rocks that stood about twenty rods from the road, that Spanish George went and took a look at it himself, and gentlemen, the gold was sticking out of that quartz like the pints on a prickly pear; and George up and sold that mine for a cool hundred thousand, sir.

Neil. Took it mostly in stock, and the company busted up in six months, and the stock wasn't worth a prickly pear.

Jeff. Well, I don't see as the dog was to blame for that. The company sent up a fellow to be superintendent who didn't know as much as the dog.

Pap. Yaas, then they sent up another one, but he was too almighty smart. He got out gold enough, and paid all the dividends to himself. In fact, he vamoused the ranch with about \$20,000, and they never could catch him, nohow.

Jeff. I remember him well. (*Looks closely at Neil.*) His name was *Tom Hart* then, but they say the vigilantes at Placerville had a better title for him. (*Neil winces.*) Oho. I've got a hold on Mr. Norris now.

Neil (aside.) This is evidently a conspiracy to ferret out my antecedents, but pshaw!

Mr. S. (aside.) Memorandum number one. "Tom Hart." So this Jeff Rogers knows something about the man I'm after, eh? I'll question him.

Father F. Pap, I think that is a pretty good story, and calls for the drinks. (*All exit C. except Jeff and Mr. Stalkenlily.*)

Stalkenlily. Mr. Rogers, I have something to say to you. You have been on the line here long enough to know who I am.

Jeff. Yes, I knew who you were the moment you came into the room—the Wells-Fargo's Detective,—even if you *have* been away a long spell.

Mr. S. No need of particulars between old acquaintances, then. I'm looking for a man high and low, and I have a snug little country residence for him, with barred windows, up country. By the way, who goes up the road to-night with you?

Jeff. Nobody but yourself and the young man you are traveling with, and Neil Norris.

Mr. S. Exactly, now I want you to tell the young man to ride outside with you, so I can have a private talk with Mr. Neil Norris. See?

Jeff. Certainly, sir. In fact it will be healthier for both of us, sir, if you keep him inside. But then I've no cause to quarrel with him so long as he does not interfere with me or my driving.

Mr. S. What sort of a man is this Aaron Parsons? (*Neil listening C.*)

Jeff. Well, Aaron is a harmless sort of a man, but there's something the matter of him. He's had a big scare sometime, and can't get over it. Pet has the spirit of ten such men as he is. I wouldn't like to believe he would lie or steal. He wouldn't sure, if Pet was around. (*They exit L. Enter Neil C, comes down C.*)

Neil. So then this man is on my track, and he has that lynx-eyed Jeff Rogers to help him; but I have old Aaron under my thumb and he daresn't say his soul is his own. Ha! ha! ha!

Pet. (*Enters L. unobserved by him*) Sir, he is safe enough from your persecutions. I have friends to protect us, and even if I had not I should not fear you, for I can play my cards alone. I have a full hand against you, Mr. Norris, and I warn you in time that the best thing you can do is to go,—and never let me see your face again. (*Tableau.*)

CURTAIN.

(*Second Picture. Jeff and the Detective seen C.*)

ACT II.

Same scene as Act I. Tables removed. Time, afternoon. One day later than the time of last act. Valises; trunks; etc. At rise of curtain "Pet" and Harry Grosvenor discovered. Pet behind counter, Harry leaning over it in front.

Harry. It must be a great sacrifice, Miss Parsons, for you to live in this wild solitude, with such rough neighbors, and without your accustomed pleasures.

Pet I do not consider it a sacrifice.

Harry. Pardon me, I do not mean to imply that you do not find some compensation here for whatever you left behind in the East.

Pet. I left nothing behind in the States, except such things as my piano and my pictures. My home and my friends are here. And these rough neighbors have truer hearts than men in fine clothes.

Harry. (aside.) Is she becoming personal. (*aloud.*) But you do miss—

Pet. Yes—the piano—and the sea.

Harry. Then you used to live by the sea?

Pet. I have lived by the Atlantic, and wish I might see it again. But I waste no time on such thoughts. If I were at the sea-side I should miss my mountains. You do not know the mountains yet—when you do you will not wonder that I love to live in their shadows. And when you know these people you will find them heroic, *if not polite.*

Harry. (aside.) She is true blue, anyhow. (*aloud.*) Do you know, you remind me of my sister Gertie, for you look at things as she does. She *knows* what she believes; while I—I am always searching after the truth.

Pet. Well, if I resemble your sister it is in telling the truth, and I don't worry myself about things I can't understand. Of course it is right to do right, and that is the end of it all.

Harry. But what is your opinion of *truth*?

Pet. I hate conundrums. Truth is a noun. Don't make an interrogation point out of it.

Harry. Do you mean then I should not search for truth?

Pet. Yes—if you mean by truth, something truer than honesty or kindness, deeper than sorrow and sin, something—

Harry. Absolute.

Pet. Yes. Then all I can say is I don't believe you could do anything with it if you had it. There was a man here one night with a patent for making something that would dissolve everything else. He pretended that it was an old secret, and he was going to apply it to the quartz mines.

Harry. It was perhaps, the universal solvent of the ancients.

Pet. Well, whatever it was, he proposed to work such wonders with it that I asked him at last what he was going to keep it in; and you never saw any one so embarrassed. The boys gave me three cheers.

Harry. You have silenced me on abstract questions, but I would like to know how you can find anything tolerable in such rude men? Do they not spoil you for the harmony of nature around you?

Pet. Well, I haven't thought much on the subject. I only care for my father particularly, for I think a father is always lovable. Brothers are hard and selfish, and lovers uncertain, you know.

Harry. Yes, I suppose. But I hope you wouldn't choose one of these rough men for a—lover? That would be casting pearls to swine.

Pet. Don't try to flatter me, Mr. Grosvenor. Besides these are *gentlemen*, not swine. As far as my experience goes with men—well, I have a few married friends, and I know that married happiness is hardly ever realized, for something always gets out of joint.

Harry. But all men are not rogues and tyrants.

Pet. Yes, but nine-tenths of woman's unhappiness comes from man's inhumanity. A woman can wound our self love, but it is only a man that can wound and kill our hearts—all noble aims and all hope of heaven.

Harry (aside.) She will not understand me. She will not believe me if I tell her that I love her. Well, then, patience a little longer.

Pet. All these rough, hard working fellows treat me kindly and I do not lecture them on their vices; but they know my thoughts and try to please me. There is no one to care for them spiritually but Father Flynn, but he isn't here often. I think the boys care more for me because I *am* here all the time—and then Father Flynn and I are on the best of terms. He calls me his "Little Heretic Missionary." Ha, here he comes. (*Enter Father Flynn C.*)

Father F. Was ye spakin of me?

Harry. She was telling me she was your assistant.

Father F. Yis, she and I have chairge of this diosase. But the blissid girrul taches all the Catholic children from the Protestant Boible.

Pet. Now, Father Flynn, you mustn't complain. You must help me all you can.

Father F. May the blissings of the saints loight on ye,—but ye ought to be a good Catholic intoirely—and sure that will come in toime. Bad cess to it, it's a perilous thing misleading the innocent sows of them childer, and making heretics of the men and wimmin. But no doubt you'll do good work in the eend, for by me sowl the poor craythers are go'-ing to the divil intoirely, and ye can't make things much woorse.

Pet. But, Father Flynn, I am doing all the good I can. You can send me some Catholic books and I'll teach out of them, for I'm not a bigot. (*aside to Harry.*) See how quickly I'll bring him around.

Father F. Yis, I'll do phwat I can to counteract your bad influence. I'll come and talk to the byes, and I'll make some checker-boards for your reading room. I'm a mighty workman at the carpentry business. And if ye have no objection, I'll put the sign of the cross on the under side of the boords and—and ye kin larn them out of the Protestant Boible if ye wish, it's better than nothin at all. But it's a wicked heretic ye are—and I'll write to the Bishop that the haythen are getting the upper hands of me here. Oh, ye swate misguided crayther. But come I have a word to say to ye, if the gintleman will let ye off. (*Exit L. followed by Pet.*)

Harry (aside.) Indeed she is a sweet misguided creature. If she had the advantages of civilization and culture, I should not much mind making her my wife. She is very clever—too clever for these parts—but she is not—no, she is *not* exactly *proper*. Somehow she reminds me of a boyish love of mine, at Seabrook—and by the way, she bears the same name, Parsons. (*During this speech Stalkenlily has entered C. and stands listening.*)

Mr. S. Would you be surprised to hear, my friend, that this is the same lady?

Harry. Confound it man, were you listening?

Mr. S. Yes I'm a sly dog—devilish sly. Have to be in my business—detective, you know. But if you stay here much longer, Pet will have a new proselyte for Father Flynn. They all give in to her, somehow. Every man in the camp loves that little woman.

Harry. You seem to know something of her, sir?

Mr. S. It s in my line of business, you know. Used to know them at Seabrook. Parsons was cashier of the bank; wife died; pretty little prop-

erty of his own. They say he educated Pet, and she took the lead in society there. They got into trouble and left there suddenly. But thereby hangs a tale. I'll tell you some other time. Ah, here comes Aaron. Good-afternoon. I would like to see him alone, if you please.

Harry. Oh, certainly. I will withdraw. (*Exit L. Enter Aaron R. with express box.*)

Mr. S. No time for ceremony. Do you know this Mr. Neil Norris? *Aaron* (*frightened.*) Ye—e—s.

Mr. S. Did you know him when he was Tom Hart?

Aaron. N—n—o.

Mr. S. Nor when he was Tom Ambrose? (*Aaron turns away frightened.*) Confound it, man, I'm not after you. I'm after him. If you had any pluck now, you would help me, and thus help yourself out of difficulty. He got you into a scrape once, and you owe him one for that. Take care he don't get you into another. My name's Stalkenlily; there's my card sir, (*hands card. Unfolds an old scrap of paper which he shows to Aaron.*) That was a check for \$10,000 on the Seabrook Bank, and that's my name to it, if I didn't write it. Seen it before, eh? (*Aaron sinks helpless in a chair.*) Well, if you can't talk I can't. I shall be back in a few days, and you'll think better of it. Good-day, sir. (*exit Aaron, with box L C.*)

Mr. S. The man's innocent. But what a fool! I thought he would give me the evidence to fix the other fellow; but down he goes in a heap. He may warn Ambrose, and what would Wells-Fargo say to me then? But, pshaw! After this affair is off of my hands, I'll come back here, and sit square down to it, and have the truth out of him. If I can't go for Mr. Ambrose I have a good case against Mr. Hart; and I suspect I'm just in time to spoil a neat little game for Mr. Norris. A three-handed reel. Ha, ha. (*Exit C.*)

(*Stage coach is backed up L. outside of door, so as to show hind wheels. Business of carrying out trunks and loading boot of coach, under the direction of Aaron, who comes on L. two miners assisting. Pet and Harry come on R. and stand conversing aside R. Jeff watches them closely.*)

Jeff. Pet don't treat people that way, first go-off. That's queer now; a little too kind, and yet not kind enough. Bids him good-bye as if she had known him for years, and yet as cheerful and jolly as if he was coming back to-morrow. I'll find out how the land lies. (*Pet and Harry shake hands at parting. Harry walks toward door L. exit Pet R.*)

Jeff (*intercepting Harry.*) I say, partner, you'd better sit up on the front seat with me.

Harry. All right sir, and thank you for the privilege, as it will give me an opportunity of observing the scenery. It is simply grand here.

Jeff. You may well say that. There's nothing sir, to beat the Sierras except the Rockies and the Himalayas. Some folks bet on one and some on t'other; but there's not many that have seen them all three as I have. As for me, give me the Himalayas for once in my life, the Yosemite once a year, and the Divide here for a steady beverage.

Harry. Do you often meet with accidents?

Jeff. You may well ask that. Right about here is whar "Cumber-

land Mike" met with the closest shave ever he had. You see he was coming down the grade on a steady trot, traces all swinging, when one of the wheels struck a stone and the jar broke the brake-bar on both sides. That left the coach free to run right onto the hosses, and all Mike could do was to give the whip to the hosses, and do his level best to keep in the road. What he didn't know about driving wasn't possible to ten fingers and two eyes. Jest as they jerked around this corner here, what should Mike see but an eight-ox team putty near the middle of the road. One second more and the hosses would have jumped over the cliff, and that coach with nine passengers inside and nine out could not have been insured at 99 per cent. without a bonus. But the boys said nothing as one of the passengers was a lady and thar was no use to scare her, hey, boys?

Harry. Well, go on.

Jeff. Go on? I believe you. Go on it was, or go over, but the boys were game and they scrambled over to the side of the coach nighest the hill, when Mike yelled at them. And Mike—well, Mike he just laid on the whip, yelled like a hull tribe of Injuns and drove straight for the strip of road between the ox-wagon and the edge. The outside hosses knocked plenty of stones and dirt down the canyon, but none of them fell. The coach had two wheels on solid ground and two in the air, and before she had time to upset all four of them struck solid ground and the trick was trumped. The boys gave Mike the biggest watch in the States, as big as a Contra costa pear, and it weighed fourteen ounces before the works went into it.

Harry. But the woman? How did she behave through it all?

Jeff. Jest as you might expect from that woman, and not from any average speciment. She never spoke a word until it was all over. It was "Pet" Parsons and thar aint no such gals on the Pacific Slope!

Harry. Well, I should say she *is* a brave girl!

Jeff. Yes, as I was saying, thar's nobody jest like Pet. She jest sat thar like a knot on a pine log, never hollered or tried to get out!

Harry. You seem to be intimate with Pet—Miss Parsons I mean?

Jeff. Pet? She's been an angel to me. I've knocked about the world so much that the polish, what little thar was, has putty well rubbed off. Fact is when I lost all my money in that mining company that Tom Hart broke up, I was so cut up about it that I came near taking to liquor and cards and worse, but Pet saved me just in time—or God Almighty did, it's all the same, for he operates through his angels and she's one of them, fixed to suit the Pacific Coast, the nineteenth century, and the gellorious climate of Californy. In fact she is—ahem—she is my sister,—and a great deal too good for me—hey, boys?

Harry. Your sister?

Jeff. Well, I don't mind saying to you that that *is* the best that can be done at present—for marryin' ain't in my line. Sometimes I'm inclined to think if the old man,—but thar, I won't say anything more about it. (*turns away.*) I say, Pap Reeder, have you got any buckskin handy. I've lost the popper off my whip-lash.

Pap. I'll slit ye off a piece of my hunting shirt. Step right in here whar we can get the benefit of the candle. *Jeff and Pap exit L. Harry exit R. enter Neil and Joe C. Joe disguised.*

Neil. What infernal foolery is this? Can't you wait until to-morrow, but you must be trying it on with teamsters and mules? The whole country will be up after you.

Foe. Now, don't you worry, Cap. We will get a good haul in money and dust out of that coach.

Neil. Well, you are a fool, and so are all the rest. However, it's too late to talk about that. But mind what I tell you, if any one of you does any more fooling beforehand I'll lead the vigilantes to hang him myself. Every one of you has the rope around his neck if I chose to say the word. Now, listen to me. Have everybody on the divide above here to-morrow night when the coach comes along. You know what to do then, and how to do it. Aaron Parsons will be there.

Foe. What's the use of letting in any more? There's too many claims for the pay streak, already. What's the use of old Aaron?

Neil. He knows nothing about it, but I mean to have him *on the spot without a mask*, do you see?

Foe. Oho! I see it. So suspicion will fall on him. You are a sharp one, Cap. You are. (*Foe goes off L. and Neil exits C.*)

Jeff (*enters L. watches Neil closely.*) There's some deviltry afoot and as near as I could tell from a look at that fellow with Neil, it's that same sulking villain that played partner to Neil. But I can't make it out. All aboard. (*Exit L. all rush out L.*)

Mr. S. (*enter from R.*) I see what they mean to do. Luckily I overheard the conversation between Mr. Norris and his pal. Mr. Norris is sent as messenger to guard the treasure box on the return trip, and it will of course be stolen from him. But I will have that box filled with nails instead of gold. Ha, ha, ha, Wells-Fargo carriers of the U. S. Nails. Good joke. (*Exit C. Noise of retreating wheels heard off L; enter Aaron and Pet, L.*)

Aaron (*agitated.*) My darling, we must fly again. Añ is lost. That man knew me. Fool that I was, why did I not recognize him at first?

Pet. What is it, father? What man? Not Mr. Grosvenor?

Aaron. No, no. But let us go at once—here—now.

Pet (*firmly.*) Father, you must not speak so. Listen. I will do whatever you wish—to-morrow. There is no need for hurry. If it is that Mr. Stalkenlily that has so alarmed you, he is going beyond the town. He said so at supper. He can't be back then for two days. So we can make our preparations to go to-morrow, and leave at night after both coaches have gone.

Aaron. Yes, yes, to-morrow night. I forgot. I have an engagement to-morrow.

Pet. What engagement?

Aaron. I must go up to the half-way cabin to meet—

Pet. Not Mr. Norris? Oh, father, I wish you were more afraid of him?

Aaron. Afraid of him? So I am. But he means well—he means well by me. He says he will save me—

Pet. Save you?—from what? No, no, don't look so. I didn't mean to ask. You know I promised you I would never ask you what misfortune has come over you—though I feel it would be better, far better, if you would tell me all. Nothing could be worse to me than not knowing;

but there, never mind now, father. To morrow I will do anything you ask. Good-night, father. (*Kisses him; exits R.*)

(*Father F. enters L.*)

Aaron (*goes up to Father Flynn.*) I've got something to tell you sir. It aint about myself. It's about my girl. Have you taken any notice of her actions lately?

Father F. Yis I've noticed she seems more quiet this last toime. What's up?

Aaron. That's jest it. It ain't nateral for her to be so quiet. She's always been chipper and gay, and flying around; but lately I've seen her sitting so quiet like you'd think she was a stone.

Father F. Well, what's up wid the blissed girrul? If you want me to help you in any way av coorse I will. So spake out.

Aaron. Yes, yes, thank ye. I come to yo' cause it appeared to me you belonged to us folks. I've figgered and figgered on it and I can't make out nothing but that she is *in love*.

Father F. I think you're mistaken, Aaron. The girrul's got too much sense to fall in love while she has you to keer for. Ye didn't think she would shake you, did ye?

Aaron. I see you don't understand me. I never was much of a hand to talk, nohow—but there's only one man it is safe for her to marry, and she don't love him.

Father F. Eh? And that is Neil Norris?

Aaron. Yes.

Father F. Oho! The omadhaun! Ye don't mean to give yer darter to the loikes of him, eh?

Aaron. I don't mean to, if I can help myself—but—I cannot.

Father F. Look here, Aaron, it's about toime for you to come to confession. You've got something on your moind. Now, out wid it.

Aaron. Yes, I have. It is a terrible secret. If I tell you, will you swear—

Father F. Me swear? A praste of the Catholic Church swear to kape a sacret? Oh, no—*that's our business*, but I forgive ye, me man.

Aaron. Forgive me, Father Flynn. I know I can trust you. Well, then—this man Norris has me in his power.

Father F. Yes, I kin see that wid me eyes shut.

Aaron. And he wants me to give him my darter—*my Pet*.

Father F. Oho, the blagyard! Does he think he is good enough for the loikes of her? Oh no, oh no.

Aaron. But if I do not give her up to him he threatens me.

Father F. Now look a here, Aaron. We all know you are a real born gintlemon,—and now, would ye be after giving away yer darter to save yer own carcass? Not if you are a gintlemon, Sir.

Aaron. N-o-o-o. But I can't help myself—I can't indeed.

Father F. A darter that ye think more of than of your own life—a dear swate girrul that any of the byes in the camp would give his life to save from any harrum. And yit ye would sacrifice her to this mon to save verself—shame on ye.

Aaron. Yes, yes,—that is all too true—but I should save her from dis-

grace, for if I am disgraced she would have to share it and that would kill her. It would kill me. When I first told her he wanted to marry her she looked up at me sudden like, and I had to hold to the fence for a minute, for her eyes kinder knocked me so. I felt as if I had stabbed her to the heart. She was all fired up. Her mother was one of them fiery kind, you know. Then her eyes grew sort of soft and shiny like and she said, "Father, I'll do anything else in the world for you, but don't ask me that, don't ask me that." Now what *am* I to do?

Father F. Do? Do nothing. Or, phwatever ye do, don't play the coward. Ye have too many friends here and she has more than you have, so ye needn't be afraid, old man. Depend on it I'll see you through it all. Good-night. (*exit L.*)

(*Stage grows dark. Aaron sits in a study. Door C. opens, enter two masked men who come up behind him and cover him with revolvers.*)

First Man. (*Foe.*) Not a word if you value yer life. You must go with us at once. (*To the other man.*) You see that the gal don't foller. She's too good for an old bilk like him.

Aaron. For God's sake respect her—for my sake,—for—

First Man. Shut up your trap, old man, or we will take her along with us.

Second Man. Shut up yourself. Pears like you done talk too much.

First Man. Well, you ain't no call to be shooting off your mouth at all.

Second Man. Which I say quit yerself. You done got the old man hyar, and ye mout let him rest easy; that's all I've got to say.

First Man. Douse yer glim, or you'll have the gal out here in another minute.

Second Man. Well, leastways hold yer tongue about the gal, or I'll shoot ye, sure as my name is Dave.

First Man. Hist man, or you'll peach on the hull crowd. No names before present company or ye are a dead man. (*to Aaron.*) Come along, old man, you're wanted. (*They drag Aaron off C. door. Enter Pet R. runs to door C. and screams.*)

Second Man (*Pap Reeder. Returns to door C.*) Do ye know me, Pet? (*lifts mask.*) Don't peach on me, and I'll take good keer of yer dad. I'm Pap Reeder. I don't mean any harm by yer dad. It's one of Mr. Norris' plans but ye see that 'are detective is as smart as he is, and so he put me inter these togs, and I got inter Norris' gang of road agents, so I could take good keer of yer dad for him.

Pet. Oh, thank God for that. I know you are my friend and his, and I can trust him in your hands. But, I am going ahead of you, to warn the stage, if Selim can carry me that far to-night.

Pap. No, gal. It's too far and too risky. Ye mustn't go.

Pet. Yes, I can reach the stage before the robbers do, and all will be well. Do not stop me. I'm afraid harm will come to him.

Pap. What? To yer dad. Not while he is in my keer.

Pet. No, no, not father, but some one I love—Oh, what am I saying?

Pap. Well, in that case I spose ye must go. But it's dark and the mountain road is dangerous arter dark.

Pet. I have ridden darker nights than this down the grade, and I am

not a bit afraid. Selim knows the way, and he knows me. *I must go—I shall go and may heaven protect me.* (She kneels on one knee. Pap uncovers his head, and looks at her.)

(PICTURE. CURTAIN.)

(Second Picture. Pap supporting her.)

ACT III.

(Cut wood and rocks back. Night. Stage very dark. Sound of wheels coming off L. Enter two masked men with Aaron in custody not masked. Joe goes back and holds up letter, as stage appears L., behind rocks. Wheels stop.)

Joe. You're covered, Jeff Rogers. Don't you stir or you will get the top of your head blown off. (Jeff gets out his revolver, tries to shoot, but finds every chamber empty). No use, cap'n. Why don't you carry a shotgun? Six shooters ain't no account against a road agent.

Jeff (to Harry). They've got us! All we can do is to give in and keep our wits about us, so we can recognize the rascals.

Harry. But the passengers—they are armed.

Jeff. The passengers won't waste their powder, nor take any risks for the stage company, and besides, the road agents won't trouble them!

Joe. Tumble out; one at a time. Hold up your hands. Hand over the treasure box, Jeff Rogers, and be lively about it. (Business).

(Joe kicks the treasure box to see if it is heavy. Aaron breaks away, runs across road front of stage, and disappears.)

Harry. That was Mr. Parsons, by all that's wonderful.

Jeff. Yes, but be silent. It was only a part of the plot to have him here, and I'll vouch for his innocence.

Neil. There's one of them villains got away.

Jeff. Now, that's what I call a shame. Here's Mr. Norris thinks he has caught the hull crowd except one. Don't let the rest get away, now don't, Mr. Norris (Neil winces. The robbers take up treasure box and exeunt R. Neil and passengers come up C).

Joe. (going off R. after robbers). You're bound to stay thar until moon-down, afore you go to go any furdur, if you know what's good for you. (Exit R).

Neil (to the passengers). Boys, did they get all your shooting irons?

First Passenger. No, you bet. We are heeled yet. Got a revolver a piece.

Neil. Well, who will follow the trail with me? We can catch them yet, for they'll have to carry that box or else stop to break it open.

All. We will follow.

(They all rush off R., shouting.)

Neil (whoop heard off R. in distance). The scoundrels. I'll make them pay for that. (Starts to follow passengers off R).

Jeff (coolly). Hadn't you better make haste, Mr. Hart? You might not catch those road agents unless you know jest whar they are going.

Neil (aside). He knows that I am Tom Hart, eh! Well, I can't

afford to drop the mask now. (*aloud*). I think I can overtake them, and I am certain I know one of the fellows.

Jeff. And so do I. The scoundrel that put a new cylinder into my revolver, and has got my cylinder this minute in his'n. But I have a derringer handy, thank fortune, so jest lay down your pistol, Mr. Hart. Hold up your hands, Mr. Hart. Mr. Grosvenor, have the kindness to go through Mr. Hart while I explain the operations of this derringer. You see it takes one hand to hold the team and the other to explain. (*Points derringer at Neil*.) A derringer, Mr. Hart, is cal'lated for close quarters. Don't forget that inside breast pocket, Mr. Grosvenor, where he carries the way-mail. You see it is all for your good, Mr. Hart. It wouldn't look nice for the company's box to be robbed, and the company's messenger to be omitted in the distribution. Besides, I can take better care of that mail than you can. Now, git, you jackass rabbit. Make yerself scarce, or you'll be lynched.

(*Exit Norris R. During Jeff's speech Harry has searched Neil.*)

Harry. Why didn't you keep him while you had him?

Jeff. Because we don't want him jest yet. Can you ride a horse?

Harry. Yes; why do you ask?

Jeff. Because we must ride ten miles while they walk two. Who gets to Parsons' ranch first—that's the question.

Harry. Then you think Miss Parsons is in danger?

Jeff. I think it's my business to go at once and see. Strip the leaders of their harness as quick as you can. Thar's an old saddle in the boot of the coach; you take that; I'll ride bareback. Come, let's be off.

(*Exit Jeff and Harry L. Re-enter Neil R. Looks off L.*)

Neil. The scoundrels! They have gone, but I have one more chance at them. (*Shoots off L, after them*) Missed him. Damnation! But what does it matter now? I'll be even with him yet. But I must hasten after the boys, and get my share of the plunder. (*Looks off R.*) What's that coming? By all the fates, it's Pet. (*Noise of footsteps coming near*). Now is my only chance. I'll take her over to Pap Reeder's cabin, and let him take care of her until I am ready for her. She shall go with me now, whether she will or not. This treasure is worth more to me than all the gold.

Pet (*Coming on R. Running and out of breath*). Oh, sir, Mr. Norris, where is my father—tell me. Where is he?

Neil. Your father has escaped.

Pet. Thank God for that.

Neil. But he will be captured. You forget what I told you about a father in the penitentiary. And I am sorry to say that he was in the gang of road agents that just robbed this coach.

Pet. That is not true. You know—

Neil. I know nothing more than I saw with my own eyes.

Pet. Sir, it is false. This was part of your plot—to have him here in order to shield yourself, for you are the guilty man. You would throw this wretched crime on my father.

Neil. I would do that? You think me capable of that? I am the express messenger set to guard the treasure box, *not* to rob it.

Pet. Yes, but you did rob it. You are capable of anything! You sent men after my father to be sure of having him on the spot, and you have him in hiding now. Where is he? (*Puts out her hands in a pleading manner. He seizes her, draws her to him, struggling.*) Release me. (*She screams.*)

Neil. You are in my power now, my beauty, and I can do with you as I wish. I love you, and have sworn that you shall be mine. Come.

Pet. Never! Release me, I say.

Neil. You must go with me. Luckily I have a friend ready who will take care of you for me in his cabin until I call for you. (*Struggles.*)

Father F. (*Appears L. C. with revolver.*) Not so fasht, my friend. (*Neil attempts to draw; Pet gets one hand loose and draws her revolver on him. Picture.*)

Pet. Not so fast, Mr. Norris. You are in my power now.

ACT IV.

(*Parsons' ranch. Harry lying on a cot. Pet and Jeff bending over him.*)

Jeff. I told you so, Pet. He's come to. Now let's see what is the damage. Lucky I know something about breaks and bruises (*to Harry*). Feel faint, eh? That's natral. Hem, this cut on your forehead's no account. Wash it, Pet. Vinegar and brown paper is too expensive for that scratch. Can't move this arm, eh?

Pet. Oh, maybe it is broken.

Jeff. No, it is only out at the shoulder; ribs all right. Now that's queer. When I break anything, it's allers a rib. So many of 'em, you know, that the chances are allers in favor of a rib. Thighs? Knee-pans? All right. Thank the Lord they're not pulverized. They allers get me. Bad shape, and nothing to splice 'em to. What's this? A broken leg? Well, you'll have to lie still awhile, partner, and Pet and I will pull you through all right. Hey, boys?

Pet. Oh, Jeff, can you do anything for him?

Jeff. Well, I'm up to most of the tricks of the surgeons. Quite a bone-sharp, in fact. I'll try. I'll attend to the shoulder first. Now we must make him sit up a minute. Oh, if we had a doctor here, how he would make you holler; how he would jerk you round. But I won't hurt you a bit.

(*Bares Harry's arm; raises it horizontally; moves it back and forth, then gives it a gentle rotary motion.*)

Jeff. There it goes. Did you hear it snap back in place? It's a good deal like a bayonet joint. Get the right hitch on her and in she goes. Any hostler knows that that ever put the bottom on a stable lantern. Hey, boys? But these doctors haven't found it out.

(*Enter Aaron C, pale and panting. Sinks into a chair.*)

Pet (*rushes to him and clasps him round the neck.*) Oh, father, I am so glad you are safe at last, and that I have you home once again.

Jeff (*comes forward*). Hello, Aaron, here's a pretty mess. Good thing you have come. Stage robbed upon the divide. All the passengers

hunting for the road agents. Mighty brash about it after the thing is all over.

Pet (aside). Hush, Jeff, not a word about that now.

Jeff (aside). All right, Pet; I won't hurt your feelings, nor his'n. *(aloud)* And here's my partner and me rode down the grade like mad, for fear they'd play off suthin or nuther on Pet and you. And Mr. Grosvenor was in such a hurry he got off his hoss the wrong way, and knocked at the door with his head and his shoulders, and his shins all in a heap. Tie him together with a string. Oho! I see Mr. Norris has made so bold as to return. *(Looks L.)*

Aaron. Oh, I must go. He must not see me here *(attempts to rise.)*

Pet. No, father, you shall *not* go while I am here. You shall stay and see the thing out. *He daresn't touch you.*

Jeff (to Aaron). Just keep quiet and let me drive. I'll bring you through all right, or my name ain't Jeff. *(aside.)* I can't quite make the thing out, but Norris has some new deviltry afoot. *(to Pet and Harry.)* Pet and you ought to be armed. *(Takes a revolver from Harry's pocket, and puts it under Harry's pillow. Offers a revolver to Pet.)* Pet, I haven't had time to explain things to you, and I couldn't exactly if I had time, for I don't fully see through Norris' hand. But this pop may come handy to you.

Pet (takes her own revolver from her pocket.) I don't care to shoot except at hill-grouse or two-bit pieces. But a pistol is a handy thing to show, I have found out; and I'd just like to see Neil Norris lay a hand on dad.

(Enter Norris L, followed by three passengers who had been accomplices in the stage robbery.)

Jeff (off-hand). Well, Neil, what luck? Did you catch them?

Neil. No, but the company don't lose much. We found the treasure box broken open and full of horse-shoe nails.

Jeff (astonished.) The devil you did? Precious cargo? A mighty pretty game of the road agents to pull the treasure box beforehand, and then fill her up with nails, and let her be lost on the road. Beats Pap Reeder's box for a gold extraction process.

Neil (the accomplices look suspiciously at Neil). It will go hard with anybody that was concerned in this affair if he is found out. Wells-Fargo never lets up on a man that has tampered with the treasure box; no matter what's in it.

Jeff. That's so.

(Enter Aaron with candle, R.)

Foe. (at a glance from Neil). Thar's the man. That was one of them. The one without a mask on. *(Aaron drops candle; Pet flies to him.)*

Pet. Oh, sir, you are mistaken. My father is too well known to bear such an accusation. Speak to them, father. You were not there.

Aaron (to Pet). I was there, Pet; God help me, I was there.

Pet. He does not know what he is saying. You could not have seen him?

Foe. Boys, it's mighty rough on the gal, but he was thar.

Pet. You will not let them take him away. (*Aside to Neil.*)

Neil (aside to her.) If I save him, you know the price (*She sinks at his feet in despair. Jeff makes a step forward but stops. Harry rises on his elbow.*)

Jeff. Will Pet be true to herself now? *How can I save her?*

Harry. Will she sacrifice herself to save her father? Then I am lost.

(*Pet wrings hands, faints. Father catches her and carries her off R.*)

Aaron. Thank God, she has not made the sacrifice for my sake. (*Exit L.*)

Neil. I am glad the young lady is insensible, for I am obliged to confess I distinctly saw her father among the robbers of the coach. Probably it will be best to arrest him until we can hear from the sheriff, and meanwhile the house can be searched for the money stolen from these passengers.

Jeff. No you don't. No sending for the sheriff while I'm around. This is *my* affair. They stopped *my* coach. People don't stop my coach and get off easy—hey, Neil? We can't get along without a sheriff, boys. I guess we know how to run a trial by lynch law. Some of you escort the man out doors and we'll organize.

(*One man starts to rummage bar and express room L. Another starts toward door of Pet's room R. Harry points revolver at him.*)

Second Man (Pap Reeder disguised as Georgia Dave.) 'Pears like you had better pleasure the Kernal, thar. He's got the dead-wood on ye. His weepin' is done drawed; hit's a pore show for you, and yer bound to git. (*The man leaves door.*)

Neil. Well, gentlemen, we must have a quorum in order to lynch this man?

(*Enter Aaron R.*)

Aaron (aside). What's that he said?

Jeff. This place ain't quiet enough. We don't need any witnesses beyond ourselves—hey, Neil? When you made a hole in old Si Small's head, *you* didn't have any witnesses, did you?

Joe. Drop that. Old Si war my pard.

Jeff. Excuse me; I wasn't aware of that, but it's all right you know. The jury said it was all right, only *I wasn't on the jury.* I wish old Si was here now, for he was an excellent hand on a vigilance committee. Hey, Neil?

Neil (aside). He seems to know all about my past, but I do not fear him (*aloud*). You don't seem in any hurry for business.

Jeff. Start your team easy, is my motto. Well, I allow that's a good place up thar on the edge of the canyon, under the pines. Mr. Norris will please step up thar and look if thar's any one coming up the grade; and by the time he gets back our little business will be attended to. And perhaps this gentleman (*to first passenger*) will look down the road. There's half a mile ot moonshine, yet. *Neil exits C, and First Man L.*)

Second Man (Pap Reeder). I allow I'll stay right here and see the thing through, partner.

Jeff. That's right. Prisoner, stand up. Gentlemen of the jury, thar's no need of making a long rigmarole about this matter. My coach was stopped and cleaned out on the divide three hours ago, and you all know that. Hey, boys? If anybody says this prisoner ain't guilty, let him say so. It's unanimous. Prisoner, what have you got to say? The prisoner has nothing to say. Prisoner, if you have any little messages to leave, now is your time to speak. These gentlemen will do the fair thing by you.

Aaron. A message? Yes, yes—(to *Pet*). I will tell *her* now. Why was I tongue-tied before? My God! you will not kill me, gentlemen. I—I—

Jeff. You've got no time to lose. We don't hang people because they are guilty, but because they are *found* guilty; but if you want to give any private messages, we'll step out thar, and these gentlemen will keep the time for us. Eight minutes, gentlemen.

(*Exit L. Jeff leading Aaron. A pistol shot is heard outside and Jeff returns.*)

Jeff. Gentlemen, the prisoner attempted to escape, and I was obliged to draw on him. I reckon it hurt him some, for he proceeded in the wrong direction, and went over the edge of the bluff. I presume this explanation is satisfactory. If any man ain't satisfied, let him step out and say so. It's unanimous. This court is hereby adjourned. If any of you boys had a horse hitched up the glen thar, that man Norris has stolen it.

All. Sold.

(*All exeunt except Georgia Dave, otherwise Pap Reeder.*)

Jeff. (turns on him). You're another of them. Do you think I don't know you, you peanut-eating, snuff-dipping, yaller old headlight?

Dave. Easy, stranger, easy. Don't say no mo' of that talk. Hit's mighty onpleasant, and nary good in it. Whar's the ole man?

Jeff. Out of the way; found guilty, and Neil Norris has run away to tell on the rest of you, so *you* had better be gone too.

Dave. You didn't done kill the ole man, did you? I reckon I'm bound to hunt up the ole man, and I'm gwine to do it shore.

Jeff. And I reckon you'd better get out of this, unless you want to be derricked. If you care anything about Aaron—he's safe enough. It ain't more than ten minutes since I fired my pistol over his head, and told him to git—all on account of the girl.

Dave. Mought have knowed that, but the ole man ain't guilty. He's wind-shaken. I done see the hull thing. No, I *ain't* afeerd. Here's my passport.

Jeff (takes paper and reads). "Aaron Parsons or Jeff Rogers may trust the bearer. STALKENLILY." (*Hands it back.*) Keep the paper. I'm sorry I was so hard on ye. The best thing ye can do is to hang around for a day or two, for Aaron will be back to see his daughter.

(*They exit C. Stage grows dark. Pet comes on with a bundle, listens to their conversation unseen. Goes up to cot where Harry is asleep, and kisses him on the forehead.*)

Pet. God bless and keep this noble man, who has nearly sacrificed

his life to save mine. I shall never forget him as long as I live—even if it were possible to forget the man I love. (*Kisses him again, and exit R. Jeff at door, C, looking after her in a dazed manner. Kisses his hand to her. Harry starts up and looks at him wildly.*)

Jeff. She's jest gone, partner, arter her ole man, and we needn't expect her back *here* any more.

PICTURE CURTAIN.

ACT V.

SCENE—Same as last act. *Intermission between acts, five to ten minutes. Harry lying on sofa. Enter Jeff R, reading a note.*

Jeff. Here is a note, partner, I just found on the table in Pet's room—her *bo-door*, I suppose you Eastern folks call it.

Harry. Well, what does it say? Does it explain why she went away?

Jeff. Jest wait till I read it to you, will you? (*reads slowly*). "Dear Jeff." First time she ever called me dear. "I am going with my father, why or where I do not know. He says you spared his life, but he wishes you had not." Now what's the use of a man talking that way, Harry? If Aaron wasn't sech an infernal coward—but excuse me—I see you do not know him as well as I do. But, here, you read it, pard. Your eyes are better than mine. (*Dashes away tears; gives note to Harry.*)

Harry (reading). "Do not follow or try to find us. It will only make things worse, and perhaps kill him. I must have him alone for awhile, to have him regain his strength and—"

Jeff. Thar she goes again. She fairly worships that old dad of hern. I'll be blowed if I don't sometimes think she ain't his darter, for she is as brave as a grizzly, and he hain't no more spunk than a coyote. But go on, pard, go on.

Harry (reading). "If you will take the ranch and run it until you hear from me, or always if you will, it will be better than to have it jumped. You deserve to own it."

Jeff. Thar she goes again. She has given up everything for that dad, and now she wants to give me a clear title to the ranch. But go on.

Harry. "The safe key is buried in the corral. My father will not tell me what happened last night, and I don't wish to keep his thoughts on the subject by asking needless questions. But I believe I understand it all now, and I have trusted *you* always. My dear brother, I will never doubt you again, nor cease to bless you."

Jeff. There it is again about being a *brother*. I don't mind telling you, pard, I tried to get a little promotion on that, but she wouldn't have it, as she thought more of her old dad than me, and ever since then I have been a little jealous of the old man.

Harry. Here is a postscript to it. (*reads.*) "Of course you will take good care of Mr. Grosvenor and cure him. I am afraid I must have seemed to him rather forward and familiar. If he ever says so, tell him I have met him before in the old days at Seabrook. Please give him my regards. I cannot think of anything more—or rather I think of too many things. God bless and keep you both. Good-bye. From PET."

Jeff. Now, look here, partner, she sends her regards to *you*, and not a word to *me*. You see you stand in better with the little woman than I do, but then she gives me a clear title to the ranch, and I ought to be satisfied with that, even if I can't have her along with it. But I won't be jealous of you old boy, and here's my hand on it. (*They shake*).

Harry. I wish I could think as you do, partner.

Jeff. Oh, it will all come round right. I guess Pet is about right. My business is to stick by you, and not go gallivanting after her. She will take care of herself and the old man too; and some of these days maybe they'll come back. I'd go on the trail if I was alone, but Pet says stay, and she knows best. Now, most women you've got to look out for and judge for, and help 'em in spite of 'em. But if Pet needs my help she'll let me know in time.

Mr. S. (enter C.) Well, boys, how d'ye do? What does this mean? The young man is injured?

Jeff. Yes, he's down on his luck, bad. But how about the robbers?

Mr. S. Oh, we needn't track them. The company don't care to spend money in a case where they haven't lost any. And it's only a question of time, for they won't go far, and if we keep quiet they'll all turn up here by spring, and then we can bag them all.

Jeff. Well, whose trail are you on now.

Mr. S. Neil Norris', and I must go right back to town. I only came down to see how you all were. Sorry Pet and her father are gone; but let the old man rest for awhile and lie low. It will do him good. You keep station here, and let Mr. Grosvenor be temporary express agent.

Harry. Do you suppose Pet will be back soon with her father?

Mr. S. Can't say. Poor Parsons is the queerest man I ever saw. Can't quite make up my mind this minute whether he is innocent. I don't mean about this last business they got him in, but an affair in Seabrook.

Jeff. What was it about?

Mr. S. Oh, a supposed forgery. He never owned up, but ran away. Suspicion fell on him; always said he was innocent, and I believe it yet. Will ferret it out some day. Well, take care of yourselves. I'm off. Day, day. (*Exit C*).

Jeff. There's a man that don't stand on ceremony. Well! I begin to see through Aaron, and maybe I *was* a trifle too hard on him. I never could get my proper bearings about him. You see it's all very well jest for fun to try to see the inside of your own head; but if you keep it up you'll get cross-eyed, so I never studied him out.

Harry. Yes, he is a strange man, but I would as soon think of Pet committing a forgery.

Jeff. Well, I don't suppose thar are two such men as he on the Pacific slope, no more than thar are two such gals as Pet. By the powers, pard, I wish she was here to nurse you as you ought to be. You do need female protection and sympathy.

Harry. Well, there is my sister at Boston. How I wish she was here.

Jeff. Send for her; I would really like to meet her, as well as have her here for your sake.

Harry. But it would take three weeks for her to come as far as Atchi-

son, by railroad, and by stage the rest of the way. Then she has no one to accompany her.

Jeff. I will meet her at Atchison. Come, that's fair enough.

Harry. Well, I will write the telegram, just to see how it will look anyhow. (*Jeff gets telegraph blanks from behind counter. Harry sits up on cot and writes.*) "Leg broken, but doing well. Can you come on at once? Jeff Rogers will meet you at Atchison."

Jeff. That sounds all right. Well, shall I send it?

Harry. Yes.

(*Jeff goes behind bar or counter, L. C. Sound of telegraph instrument clicking behind counter. Close in quickly with street scene.*)

SCENE II. *Depot. Enter from R. Jeff in long linen duster, open, displaying dress suit, silk hat, kid gloves, etc. Enter from L. Miss Gertie Grosvenor in traveling costume. Jeff lifts hat and bows awkwardly.*

Jeff (aside.) There's no discount on her. (*aloud*) Miss Grosvenor I believe?

Gertie. Yes. Is this Mr. Rogers? Oh, I am so glad, as I was afraid—afraid—

Jeff. Afraid I wouldn't come? Now you kin jest bet your bottom dollar—I beg your pardon—I mean you needn't be afraid of that.

Gertie. And I am so glad that you and my brother are friends and have stood by each other in danger. It was just what Harry needed to bring him out—a friend of your experience.

Jeff. Oh, thank you mum. I'm much obleeged to you for the compliment. But I haven't asked after my old friend, Jim Lossing, that lives in Boston, and your brother said you knew him well.

Gertie (looks down, blushing.) He is quite well.

Jeff. (walks R. aside.) Blundered agin. Well, it's none of my business. She's just one of my passengers and I've no call to be twittin' her about her sweetheart. But then I only wanted to find out how the land lay, for I am interested in her somehow.

Gertie. Mr. Rogers, I ought to have asked after Miss Parsons and her father. Harry has written me often of her and I know I shall like her.

Jeff. Pet and Aaron have gone away, nobody knows whar. They clared out in the night after the stage robbery. But I'll tell you all about that on the road. No use stakin' our whole stock of news on the first deal. But don't you be afraid about Pet. She can take care of herself and the old man too. And if she wants any help from me, she'll let me know in time. Thar's no fooling about Pet. No more like any other woman—than—present company excepted.

Gertie. Harry seemed to like her very much.

Jeff. I should think so. Who don't? If you had seen the way she watched and tended him there in the midst of her own troubles, you'd believed in her too. But thar's our stage and we must be goin'. (*They exit L.*)

(*Enter from R. Mr. Alec Bartlett, the president of Seabrook Bank, surveying a bank note. Handsomely dressed.*)

Alec. Well, here I've been in this city for a week, and no clue yet to

the one who passed this bank note. It is extremely odd I should find this note in circulation after so many years, and coming from the bank here; but nobody at the bank remembered who passed it. Well, I feel as if my road had changed into a squirrel-track and run up a tree, as these Westerners say.

(Enter Mr. Stalkenlily R. disguised. Aside. Looks R.)

Mr. S. It's Tom Hart, as sure as my name is Stalkenlily.

Alec. (aside.) Sure as fate—it is Stalkenlily. (aloud.) How do you do?

Mr. S. Why, this must be Mr. Bartlett. My name's Stalkenlily as you say. Beautiful name ain't it? But how the devil did you know me? You see that man out there. (Points R.) Well, that is Tom Ambrose alias Tom Hart, alias Neil Norris and the devil only knows what else,—and he's the man you and I are after.

Alec. No! Don't let him get away for heaven's sake.

Mr. S. Keep cool. No hurry. He can't get away now. I have been tracking this Ambrose-Hart-Norris around town for three days, and never came up with him until this minute. But we'll not lose him now. Ah, he's coming this way. Turn your back so he won't recognize you while I put the grippers on him. (Enter Norris from R. with heavy beard and otherwise disguised. Stalkenlily approaches and lays a hand on him.)

Mr. S. I have a warrant for you, Mr. Norris. You needn't make any resistance, it's too public a place, besides my papers are made out in regular form. It's best to rest easy. You might gain some time until a requisition should be made out for you from the Governor of California, but when the State of California gets hold of you she'll charge double. That's right. Surrender like a man. (Puts hand-cuffs on Norris.) I suppose you know Mr. Alec Bartlett, of the Seabrook Bank? You see his father was president of the bank you robbed, Mr. Tom Ambrose.

Neil. Is that going down in the bill?

Alec. No, we only want to get the facts about that matter.

Mr. S. We want to clear Aaron Parsons, whether we do it by trying you or not. If this Seabrook business goes into court we'll try that first, and after we get through with that we will call on you again Mr. Hart. Wells-Fargo can wait. Then there's old Si Small's murder.

Neil. You needn't squeeze so hard. I've no objection to clearing that old fool for his daughter's sake if for nothing else. If he had had her spirit he would have cleared himself long ago.

Mr. S. But as he hadn't her spunk, you persecuted him in order to get her? Why any fool would have known he couldn't get her that way. Well, we'll escort you to a place where we shall be free from observation and hear your story. I think it will remove a cloud from the character of an innocent man. (Exit L.)

SCENE III. Parsons' Ranch as in last act. Gertie discovered seated by Harry's couch. Jeff seated near by. Enter Pet with water-stained and bedraggled riding habit.

Jeff. By all the powers at once, it is Pet. (Gertie rises.) Pet, this is Gertie—Miss Grosvenor, I mean.

Pet. (smiling.) I am glad you have come, Miss Grosvenor, for your brother's sake. We have not treated him well out here in the moun-

tains. (*turns to Jeff.*) Jeff, I want you. Father is not well. He is sinking every day. I am afraid he will die. Come with me and see what you can do for him. (*Jeff and Harry start up eagerly.*)

Harry. Let us all go at once.

Gertie. I can help you watch over him.

Pet. Oh, thank you, but—

Gertie. Oh let me go. Men are not good nurses, you know.

Pet. I am afraid you do not know how good men are, and how bad, for your life has not been like mine. But I shall be glad to have you go if only for company. (*aside.*) Glad indeed. His sister must be my friend.

Jeff. Don't you think, Pet, it will be best to have him here? You don't know what might happen.

Pet. But it would be impossible to have him brought here to-night for the river is very high, and the quicksands are bad. I had a hard struggle on the treacherous river bottom, myself, and but for my sure-footed mustang I would not be here now. And where I do not dare to go, no man would dare.

Jeff. Hey, boys? No man? Well, I dare. (*exits hastily C.*)

Pet (*attempts to go after him*) Oh, he shall not go; the brave fellow would sacrifice his life for my sake—for father's, but— (*rushes to door C.*)

Gertie (*restraining Pet.*) You must not go back to night. You can not. It would be death. Listen to me. Trust him. You must stay here.

Pet (*relenting.*) Ah, I had forgotten courtesy and hospitality in my fear for my father. I had forgotten you are my guests. (*sighs*) Yes, I will stay, and trust to Jeff. He knows what is best.

Gertie. You will stay? I have been occupying your room, but I will surrender it cheerfully to you.

Pet. No, I will take Jeff's room since he's gone. We are more used to inconveniences than you Eastern folks.

Gertie. That's pretty talk to a girl who has been traveling and sleeping for a fortnight in a stage-coach. But I wish you would take your own room again—and let me share it with you?

Pet. Very well, you shall. (*Noise heard without. Enter Mr. Stalkenlily and Alec Bartlett, C.*)

Mr. S. Here we all are again, a pretty little party. And here's Pet. Pet, Mr. Bartlett. Mr. Bartlett, you know the rest of them. Now to business and tell your little story.

Alec. Well, it seems abrupt, after meeting friends one has not seen for years, like Miss Parsons. But an act of justice can not be done too soon. I have been all these years vainly endeavoring to follow out an injunction my father left me when he died,—to detect the real forger and to clear your father from any odious stigma that—that *might* have attached to his name.

Pet. Why, sir, was my father accused of a forgery? Oh, no, no, no,—

Mr. S. Accused, but innocent. That was the secret he has kept from you all these years. (*aside to Bartlett.*) Why the deuce didn't you cut it short. Don't harrow the girl's feelings. (*aloud.*) You see, Pet, Neil Norris *alias* Tom Hart, *alias* Tom Ambrose, is now in jail in Atchison for a complication of crimes, and awaiting further proceedings. He's the man Pet, he's the man that did the forgery.

Alec. Yes, he's the man, and now I want to make restitution to you, for all the misunderstandings and injuries you have received.

Mr. S. There you go again. Be brief, my son, be brief. Pet, he's got a title deed for you for the Seabrook Villa your father owned. You're an *heirress*.

Alec. Yes to be *brief*—it's all arranged. You see my father never would believe your father was guilty, and he bought the villa of the bank and held it until he died and we talked it over a hundred times. He said if I ever found Mr. Parsons and his daughter to give them back their property, and take a mortgage on it for the amount he paid for it. And he also said to give you the mortgage as a present on your wedding day.

Pet. Oh, Mr. Bartlett, you must keep the mortgage yourself. I can not take it from you, and I shall *never* marry.

Alec. Tut, tut, I've heard girls talk that way before. You can give the mortgage to any fellow you choose. (*aside*.) Jeff or Harry or—*me*, but, there, I won't be silly. I didn't mean anything by that. But my time here is short. You will let me obey my father's injunctions, will you not?

Pet. It is very generous in you; but have it as you will.

Alec. Well, business is business,—and here's some more of it. Lots have gone up in Seabrook since the war, and no end of people have been after your place, but I wouldn't sell it at any price. But there's a fellow wants to pay \$50,000 for it—magnificent price with the mortgage paid off. I *advise* you to sell.

Pet. Whatever you think best; you are the judge.

Alec. Well, then, I'll sell for \$50,000 as soon as I get back. And there's another item—ten thousand and interest due you from the bank. I believe that is all, except to say good-bye. I'm afraid you'll be lonesome. You must keep me posted about your address, and—Miss Parsons, come and visit us. Well, that's all. Good-bye. (*Pet gives him her hand.*)

Pet. Good-bye, Mr. Bartlett, and may heaven bless you for your kindness.

Alec. Oh, no, there's one thing more. Just step this way. (*They come up C.*) I say, Pet, Miss Parsons, I mean, you mustn't feel offended at what I said a minute ago about choosing the fellow you like best. I didn't mean anything, 'pon my soul I didn't. But you see I wish I was your brother, then you wouldn't feel offended at what I said; or else something a little nearer than a brother? Eh? No? 'Pshaw. Well, I'm getting to be nearly middle-aged, and couldn't cut quite the proper caper beside a very young and pretty wife.

Pet. Mr. Bartlett, you are flattering me.

Alec. No. Oh, no. 'Pon my soul. But I ain't blind. Now I can see that Jeff is dead in love with Gertie. I saw them meet at Atchison, and he was struck dead in love at first sight. Poor fellow, I pitied him, I did indeed, for I've been there myself, and got the mitten from Gertie. So did Joe Lossing. One pair of mittens was just enough to go around with us. Well, there's Jeff and Gertie.

Pet. Jeff and Gertie? Are you sure?

Alec. As sure as you are alive; but don't mix yourself up with it, for it will settle itself all right. Well, that puts Jeff out of the way as a suitor for your hand. Now, couldn't *we* join hands, Pet.

Pet. I cannot think of such a thing now, for my father is at the point of death. I hope we will be good friends, however, for you have been very kind to me. (*Gives her hand to him and crosses over.*)

Alec (goes L, aside). It seems I must be getting too old to move young hearts. At all events, I could not have thrown away \$50,000 of my fortune on a worthier object, but I thought the little sweetheart of my boyish days would at least remember me kindly. Well, she let me down easy, anyhow.

(*Enter Jeff, Pap Reeder and others L, bearing Aaron on a litter. They set him down C.*)

(*The dying man looks from one to another, and does not recognize anyone. Jeff in front of cot, and Pet on other side facing audience. Aaron feels for Jeff's hand, and then for Pet's. Puts them together. They look down embarrassed, but hold fast. Aaron closes his eyes and lifts his hands as if to bless them.*)

Pet. (*lets go of Jeff's hand and falls at her father's feet clinging to him.*) Father, father; waken, waken. Do not leave me.

Alec (comes and touches her on shoulder.) Tell him all.

Pet (looks up, and nods that she understands). Father, father, you are innocent. They all know you are innocent. They want you to go back to Seabrook. Indeed it is all so, and here are Mr. Stalkenlily and Mr. Bartlett come to tell you so. See!

(*Aaron looks around wildly, tries to rise, but falls back on cot. Stalkenlily and Bartlett go to him, kneel by cot and converse.*)

Pet (calls Jeff. C.) Jeff, you look pale. Something worries you. You must tell me what it is. When father put our hands together I remembered that we had shaken hands once before over a promise to trust one another—and you are still my brother.

Jeff. I remember that time well, and what I offered once, I will stand by now, and thar's nothing that will prevent you from taking a rough fellow like me, is thar?

Pet. Not too rough for any good woman's hand, Jeff, but I must tell you again as I told you then that you are merely thinking how to help and protect me, and I wouldn't marry you under those circumstances, nor any other. Never, never, never.

Jeff. But, Pet, you won't go back on the old man at the last, will you?

Pet. You dear old fellow, you'll have to be refused a dozen times before you'll give up what you don't want. But I hope *this* time will do. (*Jeff looks blank.*) Well, then, I don't think it is necessary to take a husband I *don't want*, in order to lose a friend and brother.

Jeff. Pet, you know the old man's wish?

Pet. Yes, and I know Miss Grosvenor's wish.

Jeff. Why, Pet, she's engaged to Mr. Bartlett, here.

Pet. I know better, for he told me so just now.

Jeff. But, Pet, *she* wouldn't listen to me.

Pet. I think you'd better ask her *yoursef*. (*Jeff goes to Gertie, and*

Pet goes back to her father and attends to him. Harry limps over to bedside of Aaron. Jeff and Gertie come up C.)

Jeff. (aside to Gertie, C.) Miss Gertie, will you hear me for a minute. I—I—thought—you were engaged to—Mr. Bartlett. If it is not so—

Gertie (confused, looks down). No, it is not so.

Jeff. Then you must hear me, and you will not refuse me a little word. I have loved you ever since I knew you—and it must be you or no one.

Gertie. And I—ever since the Indians attacked the coach on the overland trip. Do you remember what I said then?

Jeff. That you would do as I wished.

Gertie. And I also told you that I had rather stay with you. *(gives him her hand).*

Father F. (enters C.) Oh, this is sad, sad. Aaron, do you know me? *(kneels by him).*

Aaron (awakening). It is Father Flynn. God has been good to me at last. I have only one more wish to make, and that is, that these two be made one. *(He joins Harry's and Pet's hands. They look at each other intently. Aaron sees his mistake in joining their hands, then looks up and sees Jeff with his arm around Gertie.)* It is better this way then, but promise me, my son, that you will protect my little girl, as you would your own life. Promise me that.

Harry. (Draws Pet to him and folds her in his arms. She clings to him.) Yes, I will promise that, for she has become dearer to me than my own life. But are you satisfied, Pet?

Pet. I never felt so happy in all my life, and never so miserable, between love and duty, for I shall lose my dearest friend on earth—my father.

Aaron. But you have won another who loves you dearly—and I can die in peace. *(Sinks back on his pillow and dies. Pet kneels beside her father's cot, C, and all gather near.)*

Father F. It is God's will.

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